

## **ECOSYSTEM STATUS INDICATORS**

### ***Forage Fish***

#### **Forage – Eastern Bering Sea**

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The North Pacific Fishery Management Council defined several groups as forage species for management purposes. These groups include: gunnells, lanternfish, sandfish, sandlance, smelts, stichaeids, and euphausiids. Some of these groups are captured incidentally in the RACE bottom trawl survey of the shelf, which may provide an index of abundance (Figure 47). Sandfish are generally in low abundance in the trawl surveys and are usually caught in high abundance in only a few hauls at the shallower stations (Figure 47). Stichaeids, which likely include the longsnout prickleback (*Lumpenella longirostris*), daubed shanny (*Lumpenus maculatus*) and snake prickleback (*Lumpenus sagitta*), are small benthic-dwelling fish. Their relative abundance in trawl survey catches was lowest from 1999 to 2003, but appeared to increase slightly after 2003. Sandlance biomass appeared to be increasing in survey catches in the 1990s, but has been very low since 1999. Eulachon catch per unit effort (CPUE) appeared to be relatively stable in the 1990s but may have declined in more recent years. Capelin catches in the survey have been relatively stable with the exception of one year (1993) when CPUE was very high (Figure 47).

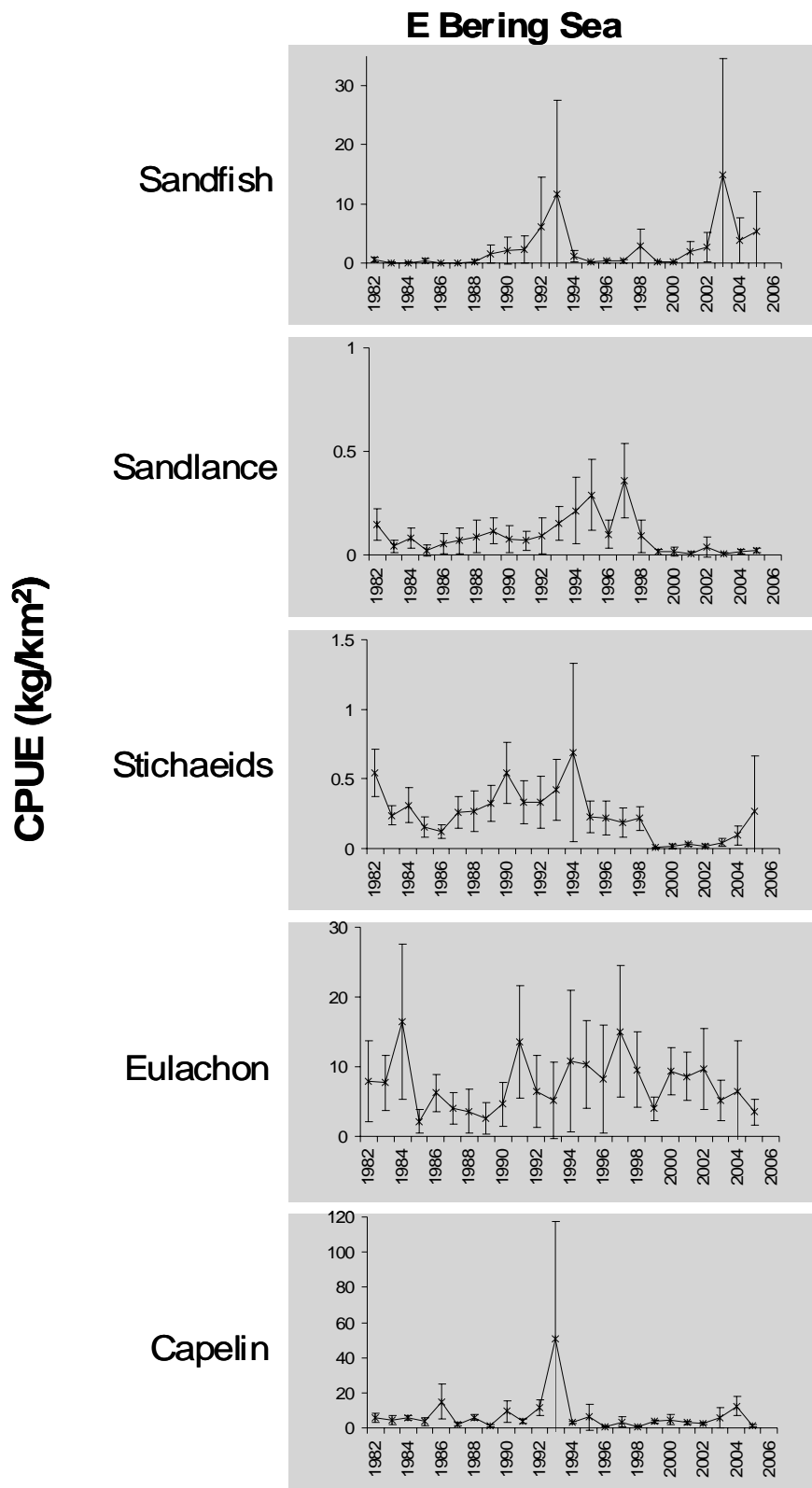


Figure 47. Catch per unit effort (CPUE) of several forage fish groups from the eastern Bering Sea summer bottom trawl survey, 1982-2005. 95% confidence intervals are shown.